

Preface

Kimio Kondo,
Chair, NIME 2003 Symposium Executive Committee

An international symposium on the subject of “Networks without Borders: Towards Cross-cultural Learning Communities” was held at NIME on October 22-23, 2003. The issues discussed included: What targets can we define for IT-based cross-border communication? What barriers exist to such communication? How can we respond to these barriers?

Having initially agreed to the importance of discussing these issues, an executive committee was organized which carried out the considerable preparations for the symposium. The committee invited well-known speakers from institutions actively involved in projects related to our focal theme.

The symposium consisted of three sessions, introduced by a keynote speech by Professor Robert Zemsky of the University of Pennsylvania, USA. In his keynote speech, Professor Zemsky pointed out the actual problems behind (involved in actualizing?) the dreams of e-learning.

The theme of the first session, “Creating and Implementing Distance Learning Programs across Borders,” dealt with critical issues concerning the environment of international educational exchange. These included the importance of equal accessibility to education for all potential students, problems of cultural differences, and a variety of pedagogical issues.

The second session concerned the sharing of instructional or learning materials. Under the session theme of “What Are We After? Defining Success in Distance Learning”, discussions focused on how to realize a flexible learning environment and the importance of constructing a learning community that could share materials and pedagogies.

The third session focused on practical issues involving various facets of networking, and was divided into three sub-sessions. Sub-session A focused on management and support issues. Sub-sessions B and C dealt respectively with cultural issues, and issues of sharing and distribution.

In the closing session we reviewed and tied together some of the discussions from the preceding sessions. We concluded that the objectives of developing networks without borders should be the building of international communities and the realizing of equal accessibility to education for everyone. The discussions in this symposium revealed the importance of collaboration as well as the sharing of materials and experiences, and also underscored the importance of new pedagogies and multi-mode approaches.

We owe the success of the symposium to the considerable efforts of the Executive Committee. Of course we cannot omit the essential contributions of the speakers, and the assistance from other staff members at NIME. As Chair of the Executive Committee I express my sincere gratitude to everyone involved for helping to create a symposium which approximated the same kinds of cross-cultural learning communities we were discussing.

NIME2003 Symposium Executive Committee

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